

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-14

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SIL-01
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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6989
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 5032

DEPARTMENT PASS USIA FOR IOP/M AND ILA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, JM
SUBJECT: CHANGE AT THE JAMAICA DAILY NEWS

1. CANUTE JAMES, EDITOR OF THE JAMAICA DAILY NEWS, WAS ABRUPTLY FIRED ON AUGUST 25, AS A CONSEQUENCE OF HIS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT "GUIDELINES" FROM THE PAPER'S MANAGEMENT WHICH "REMOVED (HIS) DISCRETIONARY POWERS IN THE SELECTION AND PUBLICATION OF OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIAL COLUMNS". THE PAPER IS TO CONTINUE FOR THE PRESENT UNDER A THREE-MAN "EDITORIAL BOARD" UNTIL A NEW EDITOR IS APPOINTED.

2. IN LATE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 25 THE FULL STAFF OF THE PAPER, INCLUDING BOTH UNIONIZED AND NON-UNION EMPLOYEES, MET TO PROTEST JAMES' DISMISSAL. DURING THE MEETING THEY AGREED TO "WORK TO RULE" (I.E. "GO SLOW") UNTIL THREE CONDITIONS ARE MET: IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWL OF JAMES' DISMISSAL NOTICE, WITHDRAWL OF THE "GUIDELINES", AND A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WITH THE WORKERS.

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AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE PRESS ASSOCIATION OF JAMAICA (OF WHICH JAMES IS PRESIDENT) WAS CALLED LAST NIGHT. IT TOOK NO ACTION FOR LACK OF A QUORUM; THE GROUP WILL TAKE A PUBLIC POSITION ON THE ACTION AT A PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING ON SUNDAY MORNING.

3. AS A RESULT OF "WORKING TO RULE", THE DAILY NEWS DID NOT PUBLISH TODAY AND IS NOT EXPECTED TO GET OUT A PAPER TOMORROW.

4. THE DAILY NEWS, WHICH HAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE PNP GOVERNMENT SINCE THE PAPER FIRST APPEARED IN 1974, HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE OVER THE LAST TWO TO THREE MONTHS. IN AN EDITORIAL ON MONDAY, AUGUST 22, JAMES CITED PROBLEMS IN THE ECONOMY, "...THE RAMPANT INCIDENCE OF STRIKES AND DISLOCATIONS...", TU RISE IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY", "...OBSTRUCTIONIST POLICIES AND INCOMPETENT PEOPLE" AND THE COUNTRY "TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF DISASTER". THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDED WITH THE COMMENT: "IN PLAIN WORDS, THE COUNTRY AT THIS TIME IS LACKING IN LEADERSHIP, BEREFT OF DIRECTION AND IS DRIFTING AIMLESSLY."

5. THE FIRING OF JAMES INVOLVES IRONY. HE HAD HIMSELF TAKEN OVER THE EDITORSHIP IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES AND FOR SIMILAR REASONS LAST JANUARY WHEN THE FORMER EDITOR, J.C. PROUTE, MOVED TO THE "DAILY GLEANER" AS NEWS EDITOR. HOWEVER, JAMES ALSO FAILED DURING THE EIGHT MONTHS OF HIS EDITORSHIP TO BOOST CIRCULATION. THE MANAGING EDITOR OF THE DAILY GLEANER TOLD THE PAO ON THE NIGHT OF JAMES' DISMISSAL THAT IN HIS PROFESSIONAL OPINION "THE DAILY NEWS WILL BE OUT OF CONFIDENTIAL

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BUSINESS BY THE END OF THE YEAR UNLESS ITS PRESENT FINANCIAL POSITION IS IMPROVED RADICALLY AND QUICKLY".
IRVING

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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 26-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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